

SOUTH DAKOTA

HIV PREVENTION

PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Half of all new HIV infections each year occur among young people aged 13–24. Among those most at risk are American Indian youth. In a 1997 survey of students in high schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), 63% of students reported ever having had sexual intercourse, and 40% reported having been sexually active during the preceding 30 days. Of those who were currently sexually active, 38% said they drank alcohol or used drugs before having sexual intercourse.

EVIDENCE THAT PREVENTION WORKS

Studies show that school-based HIV prevention programs reduce students' risk for HIV transmission by educating them to delay their first sexual intercourse, reduce the number of sex partners, and increase their use of condoms. At least partly as a result of HIV prevention efforts, the percentage of high school students who had had sexual intercourse dropped from 54% in 1991 to 50% in 1999.

PROGRAM EXAMPLE

With support from CDC and in collaboration with the BIA, the South Dakota Department of Education is strengthening HIV prevention efforts among young American Indians in BIA schools and in South Dakota public schools. South Dakota has implemented the *Circle of Life*, an HIV prevention curricula and teacher training program for American Indian youth. Curricula materials and training have been provided to all elementary and middle school teachers in two BIA schools. In the public school district with the highest percentage of American Indians in the state, all elementary and middle school teachers were trained.

IMPLICATIONS

Circle of Life is one of the first HIV prevention curricula for youth that incorporates American Indian culture and beliefs. The *Circle of Life* curricula and training program will help schools be more effective in preventing transmission of HIV among American Indian youth in South Dakota and can serve as a model for other states.